

court. The house walls had stone bases and, according to the ³⁴² wealth or taste of the owner, were finished in stone or adobe. The roof was constructed by covering crossbeams with small poles tightly fitted together and spreading a layer of lime plaster over the whole. As there were no windows, the houses had to be shallow. To admit light and air the buildings were usually two rooms deep and prolonged according to taste and wealth. The back room, which contained a hearth for cooking, was completely enclosed save for the door to the outer chamber which was left largely open on the patio side, columns or short wing walls supporting the rafters. Two-story houses probably did not exist before the Conquest, but there are cases where, to have light and circulation of air, a rear court with its surrounding rooms was elevated on a platform to the height of the roofs of the rooms around the patio in front.²⁴ (See Plate 41.)

Recent excavations in the palace of the chief of Chico-³⁴² nauhtla, a fief of Texcoco, revealed interesting data on the ¹⁷⁷ growth of a chiefly establishment. This palace was continually being rebuilt and expanded to meet the demands of a growing population and richer economy. Patios were arranged at different levels, according to the plan described above. The earliest rooms had the congested quality of a Teotihuacan plan, but the later chambers were more spa-^[362] cious and open to sun and air. Each renovation called for more space, so that allowing a family of five to each hearth, the entourage of the chief more than trebled in a century and a quarter.²⁵ (See Plate 43.)

The plan of an Aztec town tended to have a rectangular ³⁶¹ form, since the division of the land among the clans usually ^[471] followed a more or less orderly rectilinear pattern. A central

Glimpse of Tenochtitlan

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tion grounds as arteries of traffic. Thus people out to see the sights, people on errands, people on their way to the myriad functions of religious import, swallowed up the long lines of trotting carriers who, bowed under their burdens, went to the city with produce and tribute or left with goods for barter. Not a wheel turned or a pack animal neighed; transport was on the backs of men or in the bottoms of boats.

Outside the city limits the monotony of antlike columns of laden folk had been but rarely relieved by the passage of a civil functionary, all pomp and feathers, or by a stern merchant with a handful of fighting men, followed by a chain of apprentices, showing the whites of their eyes as they peered from under the press of their tumplines. Now could be seen clan leaders, wearing rich mantles and sniffing flowers as they watched the milling crowd, and black-robed priests whose ears were shredded and whose hair was matted with the blood of self-inflicted penance. There was little sound, little hurry, save for the carriers trotting to reach relief from their burdens. There was an intense vitality, nonetheless, that of a multitude of units participating in complex action, knowing each its allotted part but never the substance of the whole. (See Plates 33-36.)

A glance into the doorway of a house gave welcome relief from the cold-blooded, almost insectlike quality of life outside. A shaded patio was flanked by buildings whose interiors were cool and spacious. Mats and straw cushions on the polished red of the cement floor welcomed the visitor to repose, while the rhythmic clap of hands and the scrape of stone on stone told that tortillas were being made and corn meal ground in a kitchen at the back. Seated in a corner, an elderly man was talking to two small boys, whose

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- 362 serious faces showed that, already conscious of their partici-
 174 pation in the tribal life, they heeded their uncle's precepts as to conduct befitting boys and men. A fat little girl squatting in the doorway vainly tried to imitate with her stubby fingers and toy implements the graceful movements of her mother as she produced fine threads by the cunning manipulation of her spindle. Lolling on a cushion, a young man
 [276] idly smoked a cigarette in a cane holder as he picked thoughtfully at the scarcely healed lobe of his ear, tattered by penitential bloodletting with cactus spine and obsidian blade.

- 174 A fiesta was going on in another house, and one heard the
 527 rich vibration of wooden drums and the high squeal of reed flutes. The patio was full of people, gay in the bright colors of their holiday clothes, and the air was heavy with the cloying scent of lilies. The sharp smells of rich sauces cunningly mixed from many peppers embroidered this odor, and occasionally a light breeze wafted the cool, mystic scent of incense. Somebody was celebrating his birthday, since in the background one saw a painted figure adorned with amate paper, representing the god who presided over that event. A little apart from the feasters, who partook of their entertainment with dignified pleasure, were a group of old men whose clownish gestures and burlesque solemnity could be easily associated with the cups of pulque that a slave was industriously filling for them. Not for nothing had these elders passed through the rigid self-denial of young manhood; they were permitted alcoholic indulgence in their old age whenever a feast came to pass. A last backward glance revealed the musicians, garlanded with flowers, blowing their flutes and conch shells, while one man beat the head of a cylin-